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ABSTRACT

Recent developments indicate that future urban teacher education models will have as one of their basic components a clinical experience program. This experience should constitute a direct involvement in the activities and way of life of a given group of people in an urban community. The legitimacy of urban sub-cultures must be recognized, and the element of critical judgment of other cultures suspended. Such programs, which have a great deal to accomplish in a short time, can be most successful if they are based on a consideration of the type of people to be trained. Recent research indicates that teachers are most effective and satisfied when working with children whose ethnic and socio-economic background are similar to their own. Thus, recruitment for urban teacher education programs should give first priority to ethnic and social class origin. The next highest priority group should consist of individuals who are aware of the contradictions in our society and are committed to a realistic approach. (RT)

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THE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE:

A New Component of Urban Teacher Education Models

by

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THE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE:

A New Component of Urban Teacher Education Models

For a number of years, traditional programs for the preparation of teachers, consisting of a hodge podge of methods courses and a one semester or quarter of student teaching, have been under attack. The attackers are usually led by concerned professors of education armed with ammunition provided by public school officials who are highly disturbed over the quality and effectiveness of the products of such programs. With the increasing awareness of the ineffectiveness of teachers in inner city schools, the attacks have become more severe and the ranks of the attackers have steadily increased. This added pressure has resulted in the reassessment of teacher education models and adjustments making for more meaningful and productive urban teacher preparatory programs.

In general, the programs developing from this reassessment have assumed an interdisciplinary character. One element common to most of them is some kind of clinical experience. Based on this development, it appears at this point that future urban teacher education models will have as one of their basic components the clinical experience. This conclusion raises a number of questions, three of which are:

1) What is a clinical experience?

2) What are some basic assumptions upon which the clinical experience must be based? and

3) What are some priorities to be considered in the development of a clinical experience for future teachers to assure that the experience will be successful?

This paper will discuss these three questions on the assumption that they must be adequately answered if the nature of the experience is to be understood and subsequently prove worthwhile.

What Is The Clinical Experience?

Essentially, the clinical experience is a field experience. It is an experience which seeks to involve students directly in the activities and way of life of a given group of people in an urban community. The goal of such involvement is to acquaint the students with the life style or the cultural orientation of the group. This is done on the assumption that such acquaintanceship or such involvement will increase the students' understanding of the group and will encourage "cultural communication"[1]

In essence, this experience attempts to capitalize on the assumption that prolonged, intensive, direct exposure to the actual conditions of life is needed if prospective urban teachers are to understand cultures previously unknown to them.

Anthropologists have operated on this belief for many years. Valentine states:

> Only by this immersion in ongoing group existence can one probe throughly beneath the surface of a culture and replace superficial impressions with more accurate insights. While he (Intruder) knows that he must remain an alien, he must, nevertheless, strive to combine his outsider's perception with an insider's view of the culture.[2]

The prospective teacher, then, actually becomes an ethnographer. In assuming his new role, he must temporarily enter another cultural world and transcend his own ethnocentrism.

Cuban suggests that

> ...an urban teacher-education model...must be firmly rooted in day-to-day human experiences in inner city schools and communities...

and that:

> the thrust of such programs must be shifted from the university classroom to the community.[3]

In keeping with Cuban's suggestion, the clinical experience moves the prospective teacher from the fortress of the university and from his own cultural environment to the open fields of the neighborhood in which he proposes to teach.

What are the Major Assumptions Underlying the Clinical Experience?

There are a number of assumptions upon which the clinical experience must be based; however, only the two most important will be discussed here. Assumption one is that urban teacher-preparatory models can no longer afford to design programs which arrogantly overlook the various cultures of the urban community. They can no longer ignore the fact that a variety of legitimate cultures, often differing widely from the prospective teacher's own, exist in our urban society.

Since the time of the little red school house, we in education not only have refused to accept the fact that different legitimate cultures exist but have also failed to recognize the importance of the fact that cultural variations among people influence their educational progress. Our response to the difficulties involved in the education of people with unique cultural experiences, and more recently of inner city children, has been to assume that the problems were with the children and their circumstances. We have rationalized our failures by maintaining that the children lacked "proper early childhood ex-

periences", and were "culturally deprived"; consequently, they were not prepared for school. We have ascribed the causes for our failures in urban areas to the environmental circumstances and the life style of the children, never realizing or accepting the fact that it was the schools responsibility for reflecting the child's culture and for developing a program around whatever characteristics exist in the culture of a particular school population.

Although we have been slow to respond to the cultural differences existing in the urban setting, evidence is beginning to accumulate suggesting that we have finally accepted this reality. Recently, Senator Ralph Yarborough offered a bill to provide assistance to local educational agencies in establishing Bilingual American Education programs. The legistation proposed that the school which serves a child of an open society ought to build on the cultural strengths the child brings to the classroom.[4] This particular legislation, then, legitimizes, if such legitimacy is needed, the existence of different cultures within American society and it suggests that the schools in such a society must foster the development of children in each of these cultures. The bill, however, made only implied references to children of all cultures, but was specifically limited to children of Spanish speaking descent. It failed to consider the cultures of the American Indian, the Southern Mountain White and the Afro-American.

The clinical experience, then, rests on the assumption that the developers of urban teacher-education programs can no longer arrogantly dismiss important cultural differences in their emphasis. More specifically, the inclusion of a clinical experience in urban teacher-education models means that since the teacher who goes into the inner city will encounter the cultural problems incident to functioning with a group of people whose culture differs from his own, he must be challenged by such problems and must resolve the conflicts resulting from this challenge if working effectively in the new setting is to be achieved. The significant aspect of this total situation is that these culture conflicts must be experienced by prospective teachers and resolved PRIOR to their entering the setting as a full-time practitioner of the profession. For as Cuban says, "the improvement of instruction begins with the perceptions of a teacher before he sets foot in the in the classroom."[5]

The realizations that several legitimate and unique cultures exist in the inner city and that prospective urban teachers will encounter and be challenged by the cultures (Afro American, Southern Mountain White, etc.) of any given inner city community lead to the second basic assumption upon which the clinical experience must be developed . That assumption is that urban teacher prepafiatory programs must prepare individuals to function in what may actually be "foreign" cultures. To cite an extreme example: What would happen if a Quaker, raised in rural New England and educated completely in Quaker schools were hired to teach in a cultural setting where a system of plural marriage existed--a system in which co-wives resided separately and husbands lived with one

wife at a time, as is the case in polygamous societies in numerous parts of the world? The recruit would face a variety of conflicts which he would have to resolve if he were going to function adequately in the new setting. The set of values of the people, their goals, their political ideology, their language and their ideas on family life represent a style of life vastly different from that of the recruit. Thus, the recruit would need to understand and accept these differences. A critical view or a "holier-than-thou" attitude would render him utterly ineffective. He would either feel alienated or would alienate, however, well meaning he may be, his students, or possibly, even the whole community.

The point being made is that these cultural differences do exist and that prospective teachers must solve, creatively, the problems arising from them if they expect to function effectively in a "foreign" culture.

What Priorities Need be Considered

If our goals is to involve program participants in a successful program, what priorities must be established in order to increase the possibilities of achieving the objective? Before considering priorities, however, a word or two should be said about determining whether the program is or is not a success.

Operationally, the program, and hence the clinical experience will be successful if participants:

1) increase their understanding of the culture of the people in the community

2) tend to have a longer teaching career in the urban community than those who have not participated in the program; and

3) provide a higher quality of education than that provided by teachers not profiting from the program.

Now, what about priorities? In attempting to structure a successful program, consideration must be given to the relationship between the nature and number of tasks to be accomplished and the period of time within which this must be done. Generally speaking, in a two to four year period, a program must:

1) provide program participants with multi-cultural information (often resulting in culturally shocking experiences);

2) alert participants to other value systems to such a degree that their own may be questioned and/ or altered as they learn to accept differences among people, to

respect the right of individuals to be different and to realize that these differences do not in any way lessen the value of an individual or of a people;

3) enable them to discover the strengths of a given ethnic group's way of life; and

4) enable them to capitalize on these strengths by conceptualizing educational programs utilizing the characteristics they have discovered.

These four difficult and highly involved tasks must be accomplished at the same time that the participants are observing other teachers, doing some tutoring with selected individuals, and taking other college courses in various cognate areas to accumulate a given number of hours in order to graduate.

Given the short time and the variety of tasks which must be accomplished in that time, what are some priorities and how should they be ordered to increase the possibilities of success?

Perhaps an understanding of what priorities should be considered and how they should be ordered can be gained from this analogy. Let us assume that the vast majority of the gold fish in a given society live in very small fish bowls. Let us further assume that in order for these goldfish to live productive lives, we decide, because we are the controllers of the total situation, that they must exist and learn how to survive in the ocean, which naturally is much larger in area than the fish bowl. Thus they face many mmore problems.

We (the controllers) have determined that because the gold fish live in fish bowls, their growth and early experiences are different and peculiar to them; consequently, they begin life with a unique set of experiences stemming from their environmental circumstances. Our job, then, is to teach the goldfish how to survive in the ocean.

In that there are only a few of us, contollers, we decide that the best way to accomplish our task is to develop a program which will teach others to teach the goldfish how to survive. This we do.

In considering candidates for participation in the program, we notice that we have four categories. Category one consists of a group of men who are extremely interested in our efforts. They cannot swim; however, they are very knowledgeable about the typography of the ocean.

They know nothing about life in a fish bowl nor do they know anything about what it takes to survive in the ocean. But, they are willing, for they feel sorry for the goldfish and they want to help them.

Category two consists of a group of individuals who are extremely good swimmers. So capable are they as swimmers in fact that they are deep sea diver, which means that they have some knowledge of what it takes to survive in the ocean. They know nothing about life in a fish bowl; however, they raise goldfish; consequently, they feel that they know the plight of the fish. Because of their concern for the safety and welfare of the goldfish, they too are interested in enrolling in the program.

Category three is composed of a group of whales. The whales, naturally, can swim, and since the ocean is their natural habitat, they are well aware of the skills needed for survival. They lack knowledge of life in a fish bowl, but they are extremely eager to help. The whales have another interesting characteristic. Although they have expressed a concern for the survival of the goldfish, they are known to make smaller seafaring fish their prey. In spite of this tendency, or maybe because of it, the whales are interested in the program.

The fourth and final category of candidates are other goldfish. They too can swim. They have knowledge of not only how to survive in the fish bowl but also of survival techniques in the ocean for they have experienced the problems encountered in both places. This group, however, has some reservations about the program. Their reservations exist because of the missionary aspect of the program which suggests

some dependence of the goldfish upon the controllers and upon the program participants. They have reservations because they fear our (controllers) colonializing tendencies. They fear that our behavior will be so influenced by our past that we will unavoidably attempt to destroy the way of life of the goldfish under the guise of pursuing a humanatarian goal of improving their life. They are, however, still willing to listen to plans for the program and give some consideration to actually participating.

The problems which we, the controllers, now face concern the issue of recruitment. Given the total situation, toward which group should we direct our recruitment efforts in order to increase the possibilities of our program being a success?

In this analogy, I am suggesting that there are certain characteristics of the prospective participants in each category which indicate whether our recruitment efforts should or should not be directed toward them. More specifically, an analysis of each category should result in the recruitment of prospects in one group being given priority over the recruitment of prospects in other categoreis because of what is known about their previous experiences and because of their characteristics.

This same issue must be addressed when program are being developed to prepare people to teach in the inner city. WE MUST BE CONCERNED WITH RECRUITMENT.

When we discuss the recruitment of teachers for the inner city and the possibilities of their experiencing success in that setting, a number of studies come to mind which relate directly to the issue. Gottlieb identified differences and similarities in the views of black and white teachers toward their work with black children. He found black teachers to be more satisfied with current teaching positions than white. Black teachers tended to perceive their black children as happy, energetic, and fun loving; while white teachers were more likely to see the same children as talkative, lazy and rebellious. Note the differences. The black teachers perceived the behavior of the children positively--happy, fun loving, and energetic. The white teachers percieved the behavior of the same children negatively--talkative, lazy, and rebellious.[6]

Black teachers were dissatisfied with large classes, poor equipment, inadequate supplies and a lack of proper curriculum. On the other hand, white teachers emphasized the lack of concern by parents for their children's education, poor motivation, and discipline problems as the essential causes of their dissatisfaction.[7] Again the differences between the two groups are highly significant. Black teachers were basically satisfied with their jobs. Their dissatisfactions generally centered around the failure of the school system to provide them with the essential tools needed to do an effective job: adequate equipment, sufficient supplies, and proper curriculum. White teachers, on the other hand, were basically dissatisfied with their jobs. They were concerned about problems which they perceived to be related to the personal characteristics of the children and their

class socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to leave schools with students of lower socio-economic status than were teachers from lower socio-economic background. Conversely, teachers from lower socio-economic backgrounds were found to be more likely to leave schools with middle class students than were teachers with socio-economic backgrounds similar to those of their students. These findings suggest that teachers of a given socio-economic background tend to develop a greater understanding of students whose socio-economic status are similar to their own.[8]

In a study of the mobility of black teachers in inner city schools in the City of Chicago, Smith found that black teachers from low socio class origins were more likely to remain in inner city schools than were black teachers from high social class origins.[9]

The findings by Gottlieb, White and Smith suggest that ethnicity and social class background are significant variables in determining ones ability to function in a given cultural setting; consequently, they must be considered in the development of programs whose primary function is the preparation of teachers for urban multi-ethnic communities. One can safely conclude at this point that the success or failure of any program geered to developed urban teachers depends more on those assigned variables the participants bring with them to the program than on any activities the program provides for them after they become involved. Our efforts then, must be expanded at the level of recruitment.

A recruitment policy giving priority to ethnicity and social class origin <u>does not</u> mean that we can only recruit prospective teachers for inner city situations from among the less affluent black, Indian,

Spanish speaking and Southern Mountain White urban communities. It does mean, however, that our recruitment efforts must give priority to individuals fitting into the above mentional categories.

The next highest priority group, regardless of ethnic background and social class origins, should be individuals who are:

1) aware of the contradictions existing in our society;

2) aware of the continual exploitation suffered by the members of the inner city community; and

3) determined that such conditions and situations must be eliminated.

We must look to individuals who see the discrepancies between the practiced and professed, and who have committed themselves to a style of life permitting them to function from a realistic frame of reference in interpersonal relationships with the urban community.

In this connection, Chesler suggests that there are four ideological alternatives available to teachers in the urban classroom. He calls these alternatives: (1) the naturalistic approach; (2) the moralistic approach; (3) the teach about differences approach; and (4) the direct or realistic approach. He states that under the realistic approach, "the teacher attempts to highlight or recreate in the classroom portions of the reality that exists in the outside world."[10] He goes on to indicate that the direct exploration of realities seems to be one very persuasive way to examine discrepancies and contradictions in our society in the most truthful and effective manner.[11]

Chesler's observations imply that teachers in urban areas must be able to function from a realistic ideological frame of reference. The oppressed groups in our urban communities are well aware of the realities of our society; consequently, they will only accept those people into their schools who no longer project the mythologies of the American dream as the ideal life for the disenfranchised majority in our urban areas.

If the correct recruitment policies are used, then, the clinical experience of the urban teacher-education model should provide students with the opportunity to interact with the people in the community in which they plan to work. This interaction should come prior to their being assigned to work full-time in the community. It should result from their living in the community and becoming directly involved in the forces shaping the lives of community inhabitants. The combination of selective recruitment and living-in-community experiences should vastly increase the possibilities of the success of the program. On the other hand, if recruitment policies fail to consider the variables discussed in this paper, then, the results of the clinical experience will be insignificant, for it will have little affect on the productivity of the teacher.

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